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Michael Bartmore

By R. W. SWANN

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R. R. B.

Michael Bartmore

By R. W. SWANN

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JUL 22 1913

To the memory of F. E. Cleaveland these pages are affectionately inscribed, because if the history of the great movement now so widespread for the bettering of conditions among our people is ever fairly and honestly written, his honored name must be placed in the foremost ranks of the pioneers in this work of justice and good economy.

Michael Bartmore

Ormsby was a quaint old place in the early fifties, and is now a place no more. Where the tiny houses stood then, surrounded by well-kept gardens inclosed by white picket fences, great and massive structures tower aloft, unrelieved by even so much as a single blade of grass, and ungarnished by one single touch of what would speak of home or home life. On the very spot where Michael Bartmore's parents dwelt in their humble cottage, and where he was born, there now stands a bank — the bank in which the busy merchants of this now thrifty place are wont to store most of their treasure. Where the old coach used to enter the village, bringing mail and other parcels from the nearest points, there now stands the railroad station into which the snorting, shrieking, ever-impatient steam-driven monsters rush with laden trains and with men and women coming here to seek new enterprises where once the tranquil quiet of rural peace and solitude prevailed. No longer is the summer air fragrant with the odors from sweet and many-colored flowers and the sweetest of all scents — the smell of new-mown hay; but, instead, the smell of sun-parched streets, of market stuffs fast withering on the stands, of those who have come here to sell them, the smell of grease and oil from the many machine shops in the town, and of the crowded stables where the horses are kept — these and many other scents make themselves known to visitors here now.

The little village lay in a sort of hollow, and was surrounded on all sides by splendidly kept and thriving farms; and on these farms many of the sons, and some of the daughters, of the dwellers in Ormsby village were employed. The farms were fertile, and their owners were, as a rule, very prosperous men, full of enterprise, and consequently very progressive in their methods of conducting their agricultural business.

Minglewood was, of all these farms, the largest, most prosperous, and the most beautiful place for miles around, and those who found employment there esteemed themselves a little more fortunate than the rest. This farm ran down to the river, or, rather, creek which passed through the village, and which also furnished the power for the mill that stood on its banks.

Mr. Samuel Fenwick was the owner and proprietor of Minglewood Farm, and his kindly nature, his just and upright dealings, and his never-failing interest in the pleasures of the young people rendered him a great favorite; and his beaming face was sure to win a smile, even from the surliest dweller in the vicinity.

Michael Bartmore, concerning whose life this story is written, was, at the time of which we now speak, a hand in the service of Mr. Fenwick on the Minglewood Farm, and was fast gaining favor with his employer, because of his industrious habits, cheerfulness of disposition, and aptitude in the performance of any new task that might be given him.

A splendid specimen of early manhood was Michael Bartmore, full six feet in height, broad of shoulder and high-chested, and with limbs well-shaped and well-proportioned to his robust, healthy body. A rare thing may be said of Michael Bartmore: he was the strongest man for miles around, and at the same time the most gentle, tender-hearted man. In him great strength of body was

so coupled with strength of mind and purity of soul that it was something to be used only in aid of others — never to oppress nor to hurt them. Brave and fearless to do the thing he believed it his duty to do, scornful of deceit, and unacquainted with small evasions, he had won the esteem and confidence, not only of his employer, but of all who knew him, even before, according to the accepted and legal term, boyhood had merged into man's estate.

This tale may not be lengthened unnecessarily for it must fit into the place marked out for it; but this thing must be said, that all the strength, all the splendid physical force, all the manliness of soul within this man had need of even greater help than was within himself, and the battle that he had to fight was long and fierce; and that he ultimately conquered is a credit to his kind, for, in his darkest hours, when his soul seemed dying within him, and when he cared not if his sojourn here might be over, when despair — hopeless, unutterable despair — seemed to stifle every other sense of feeling within him,— then it was that other hands went forth to hold him up, and other hearts strove with his poor bleeding one, and ceased not to strive until the hard-fought battle was won and Michael stood firmly facing that which, as it had at first seemed to him, must shut him off from all that was of real value to him, and that could render his life a truly active and useful one. Never did calamity so dire befall any man but that, if only he could be held up by the sympathy and practical support of his fellowmen, he could live it down. It is true that the greatest effort must be made by the stricken one; but it behooves us all to see to it that the struggler has our moral and practical support in his efforts to win place and standing, even though the effort be made with heavy odds against him.

Michael Bartmore was the son of a worthy father

who had died before the boy had reached the tenth year of his age. The father had managed Minglewood Farm for many years, had purchased a little home in the village, and, with his wife and little son, had lived happily until that mysterious call came, and amid the sorrowing people of the little place his widow and her son were left to do their best in such affliction.

"Bartmore has served me well, and I will not see his wife and child want for anything while I've this good farm of mine to supply me," said Mr. Fenwick to his wife, and the good woman said she hoped that he would do well by them. The people all felt that Fenwick was the rightful friend of the widow and her child, and he began at once to perform those good offices for them which, as will appear in this account, ceased not, but were more faithfully and diligently performed as the need for them became greater.

Michael attended the village school. His attention to the tasks set for him by his teachers, his manly bearing among his schoolmates, and his upright and frank admission of his transgressions when he had been guilty of any, made him a great favorite in the school, while his love of play, his untiring activities in the rural sports so much in repute among the young folks, rendered him a leader among them.

Ormsby and the surrounding country was indeed a most salubrious dwelling-place for the boys and girls, and, naturally, of course, the men and women were, as a rule, well developed, and the lads in the open fields at their sports, and the men in the fields at their work, were very good to look upon, and their pleasant faces told of happiness and contentment not often to be met with in our crowded busy cities.

Never did manhood seem to have come with its responsibilities and its cares and settle upon anyone

so easily and so naturally as it came to Bartmore. Established now in the place his father had so faithfully filled, happy in the consciousness that he was in a position to requite in some measure the great kindness of Mr. Fenwick, and proud of the many little comforts he was now able to give his mother in their cosy little home, his ever-happy face inspired all who looked upon him with a desire to emulate his useful, happy life. He loved life. Nature told to him new and beautiful tales each day, and, as his very being seemed to drink in her hallowed, wholesome lessons, he grew stronger bodily each day, and as his strength of body increased, that strength of soul, that something within that makes itself felt by all who are brought into contact with it, increased also.

This, then, is the Michael Bartmore, the pride of Ormsby village, as we behold him seated by his mother's side on the eve of one frosty Thanksgiving. She sat contentedly knitting as he old her of the little things of interest, the bits of village gossip that reached him at his work. And then he told her of a plan for the next day — a plan for a general holiday, and of his purpose to spend the day in company with three others hunting in the great uncleared woodlands of the Minglewood Farm.

"Yes, mother," he said, "young Dick is a fine fellow, and he's doing well at college, as we all said he would. He told me to tell you that, after the hunting is over to-morrow, he is coming home with me to have a cup of your tea; and — now, mind, mother, he was in earnest when he said it — to have a nice chat with Mother Bartmore by her pleasant fireside."

The old lady smiled. She was pleased, and why should she not be pleased to know that Richard Fenwick, the son of her friend and benefactor and the friend of her beloved son, had set a time apart to come and talk with her? Her boy and this lad

had been boon companions, and she had a warm spot in her kind heart for the now ambitious young student, and felt much pride in his success.

"How many will go a-hunting to-morrow, Michael?"

"Four of us, mother," he answered; "and Dick will ride the colt I broke a short while since. He's a wonderful rider, is Dick, mother; and I can tell you, there's no finer figure on horseback than he."

"Is Mr. Fenwick going?" she asked.

"No; he says his hunting days are over now," answered the son; "but we'd like to have him along, for, though he is not so young as the rest of us, he rides wonderfully, and is the best hunter of us all. He has a fine gun, and I am to have it to-morrow, and he says I'm to prove myself worthy of it."

Clear and crisp broke that Thanksgiving morning. Four happy faces looked out upon the lovely landscape, and their young hearts leaped for very joy that they were alive to appreciate, nay, to be a very part of the scene. Four young and active men they were, bold of spirit, strong of mind and body, and fast old friends from early boyhood days; and now they are mounted, and, with a shout of joy, they are off like the wind, and are gone to the woods, where their hunting is to begin.

The village lads stood and watched them as they galloped gaily on, and, doubtless, many a boyish heart beat high with the hope that one day he would ride forth and look as handsome as did these young followers of Nimrod, the hunter of old.

Four stalwart men, well mounted, all rode into the woodlands of Minglewood Farm with never a thought of a single thing but to find and to kill the game they had come to seek; four gallant steeds carried them in, and seemed glad to bear them thither, and all was merry as a merry wedding-bell.

And of them all, the merriest man was Michael Bartmore, the manager at Minglewood.

Young Fenwick sat his horse well. He could manage the young steed as well as could Bartmore, who had broken her; and it was a pretty sight to see her yield obedience to his every wish, and to see how fondly he looked upon her, for she was his, the gift of a loving father to his well-beloved son.

The sport was very good that day. There seemed no end of rabbits, and the dogs were fully alive to their part in the hunt. All the men were well used to hunting, and were, therefore, seldom known to fire at random, or to miss their mark; and, the game being plentiful, as has been observed, a generous spirit of emulation took possession of them all, so that their spoils soon grew to greater proportions than was usual on these occasions.

It is strange that these great-hearted men, these strong and mighty men, must, for very sport, kill, even for the sake of killing. They had no need of all their victims for food; and, though no one said so, their very successes were like to become a burden to them, and yet, striving one to outdo the other, they went on killing, and each man was triumphant as his last shot placed him for a time ahead of his companions.

It was a little past noon when Bartmore, coming up with young Fenwick, pointed to his well-filled sack, saying, playfully:

"Dick, I'll stop until you catch up."

Fenwick turned to make answer, when Bartmore, whose eye was ever keen, exclaimed:

"There's your chance, Dick!" and he pointed to a rabbit that was scampering away at full speed.

Fenwick saw the creature and wheeled round to pursue, but either he startled his young horse, or else his hand slipped, and his gun was discharged so suddenly and so unexpectedly that it fell from his hand. In a moment the young horse, being

startled by the discharge so close about her ears, began to rear, and would have thrown a less alert rider from the saddle. Fenwick, as he struggled with his horse, called to Bartmore, telling him that he had better get the rabbit if he could. He received no reply, and, having now got control of his horse, turned his head in the direction in which Bartmore had been standing when last he had spoken, expecting, as he afterwards said, to see him mounted and ready to ride away. In another instant there sounded through those woods a cry of such unutterable despair, such bitter anguish, that those who heard it were for a moment rendered helpless with fear and alarm.

"Help, help, for God's sake! Oh, Bartmore, do you hear me? My God! I have killed him! Help! Help! Are you mad? Come, Nichols, Moreland, I tell you; I've killed Bartmore! Bartmore! Michael! Oh, speak to me! I did not fire! Oh, Nichols, Moreland! Quick! Quick! He's dead!"

By this time Nichols and Moreland had come up with the distraught man, whom they found bending over the still form of his friend and still calling upon him to speak to him, and his whole body twitching in the throes of an agony too great for any human interpretation. They gently drew Fenwick back, and then, stooping, they lifted Bartmore between them.

"He's not dead," murmured Nichols. "Come, Dick; lend a hand. Let us get him home."

But no answer came from Fenwick. He, the strong and stalwart man, had fallen prostrate upon the earth, stricken helpless by the horror of what had happened.

"You stay here, Nichols," said Moreland, in a voice that quivered not a little as he spoke; "you stay here, and I'll go for help."

So Moreland, mounting, hastened to the nearest farm, where, upon his telling what had happened,

immediate preparation was made to receive the injured man, and the man of the house, with one of the farm-hands, hastened back with Moreland, taking with them such conveniences for carrying the sufferer as were available. They lost no time in returning, and found Nichols still supporting Bartmore in his arms, while poor Fenwick, who had by this time regained sufficient strength to move, bent over him, calling to him again and again, in a voice that was full of the pleading agony of utter despair, to speak but one word to him; and again and again the poor, unhappy man would say, "I did not fire, Michael; indeed I did not. I want you to speak and tell me that you know I did not fire that shot!"

They lifted him gently and bore him away to the farm-house, where a place had been prepared to receive him. One of the lads had been sent off posthaste for the doctor, and very soon after they had brought Bartmore and placed him upon the bed, the lad returned with the physician.

By this time the injured man began to show signs of returning consciousness. His lips moved slightly, and, as the physician entered the room, those who bent over poor Bartmore understood him to moan about the darkness; and Moreland, who was nearest to him, spoke softly to him, asking if he did not know him. The sufferer seemed to try to think, but only murmured, "It is dark, so very dark," and then he seemed to relapse into unconsciousness again. The doctor stepped to the bedside.

"Gunshot, eh?" he half inquired, half asserted; "he's alive, at least, but he's badly hit."

Then the laconic old doctor made his examination. Not a soul stirred in the room, save when the housewife gently carried her little five-year-old daughter away, because the child wept bitterly at sight of the big fellow who had many a time tossed her upon his knee, thus stricken down and unable to smile upon her. The doctor applied restoratives,

and Bartmore began to revive; still no word was spoken. Tenderly as a woman, the big-handed, raw-boned doctor touched the wounds, and learned as best he could how bad they were; and, as he thus examined, his face gave no sign to those who so earnestly watched him. At last he had finished, and the wounds were covered from sight. He turned from the bed.

"Will he die?" asked poor Fenwick, in a broken voice.

"God knows," answered the doctor, in a softer, gentler voice than any had ever heard him use before; "God knows! But there's a chance for his life, if——"

"If what, man?" Fenwick was himself now. There was a chance; there was an if. Perhaps some effort of his might help, and what would he not gladly do to save his beloved friend? "If what? Speak quickly. It was my gun, in my own unlucky hands, that gave the wound. Can I do nothing for him?"

"Ride, someone, and ride fast, to Edgewood, and tell Dr. Granston to come here at once. I am not equal to this case. Bring Granston, and tell him — but stop; I'll write the message, and he'll come."

So the message was written, and, though every man there longed to do this errand, not one disputed Fenwick's right to do it.

"I'll wait here," said the doctor; "remember, minutes count. Be quick; everything may depend upon this."

There was no need for more words. Fenwick was mounted and away like the wind. Never was horse so driven by him before. As he passed through Ormsby, the people called to him, and some even thought that the young horse was having it all her own way, and these became frightened for his safety, and would have tried to stop him, but he waved them aside and drove fiercely, rapidly on.

Leaving Fenwick thus on his ride of mercy, let us return to the chamber where Bartmore lay. In a very short time after Fenwick had departed, the wounded man stirred, and as the restoratives had taken effect, he asked where he was, and they told him.

"It is all dark," he said; "I can see nothing."

"I've bandaged up your wounds, Michael," answered the doctor, "and you can't expect to see through my bandages. Lie still; that's very important now."

"Are you there, Dick? I can't see. Where are you?" he then asked.

"He's gone to bring Dr. Granston; I want him to see you," the doctor said, quietly.

For some moments there was a deep hush in the room; then the patient spoke again: "Does my mother know?" he asked.

The doctor told him she did not.

"Where's Nichols? And where's Moreland? Are they here?" he asked. "I can't see, doctor; it's dark as night. Can't you loosen these bandages a little?"

Moreland and Nichols both spoke to him, and the doctor did not at once answer.

"I can't stand it, I tell you, doctor; it's dark. Let me see the light a little. It's darker than night. I can loosen the bandages, and I'll be careful."

His hands went to his head, but the doctor stayed them.

"Now, boy, have a little patience," said the doctor; "light isn't good for you just now. You must be quiet and let my work alone."

Bartmore made no reply, but those who looked upon the face of old Dr. Chapman — for this was the name of the faithful old doctor who served the people of Ormsby and the country round about so well — saw that it was a grave and troubled face, and that the man who seldom showed signs of any

emotion, was agitated and anxious. No one spoke to him, no one asked questions of him now, for he had made it clear that he had nothing to communicate to them.

It was a strange sight that might be seen in that room then. Bartmore lay prostrate upon the bed, restlessly twitching his fingers, and at times seeming to be suffering great pain. Nichols and Moreland stood at the foot of the bed, dejected and looking the utter helplessness they both felt, while the man of the house, and several of his neighbors and his farm-hands, stood about the doorway. As these men sat and waited, they all looked from time to time at the doctor; but he stood as one alone, and seemed unconscious of their presence, or that they would fain learn of him the thing he had once, and only once, made any statement about; and that statement gave them no comfort, no hope. As they stood thus silently, there was a rustling sound, and Bartmore's dog, in spite of some slight effort to prevent him, came into the room, and, seeing his master lying there, came to the bedside and affectionately licked his hands. They would have taken the dog away, but Bartmore, though weak and in great pain at that moment, patted the creature fondly upon the head, and telling them to let the dog stay where he was, said, as if the poor animal could understand him:

"No more sport for me, old fellow; it is dark — darker, I know well, than any bandages could make it."

The doctor started at these words. The men in the room looked inquiringly at him, but he uttered not a word, only the set lips quivered a little, and, looking steadfastly down upon the stricken man, he seemed to find no change that could alter his grave expression; and as he turned suddenly away and walked hastily to the window, more than one man who watched him, said afterwards that the tears

stood in his eyes; nor did he ever deny that it was even so.

No human effort could have been greater than that which Richard Fenwick made that day. Nothing stayed him. Fences and ditches were leaped without pause. The horse strained every muscle, and seemed ready to give up her life in the service. On they rode, through fields where no paths were to be found — yes, even through ground that few would dare to trespass upon; but if any tried to stop him, Richard Fenwick heard not, or, hearing, heeded not their calls; for the friend of his childhood — the friend, the beloved friend of his youth, lay wounded — dying, perhaps — and the gun in his hand had laid him low.

Dr. Granston was in, and read the brief note Fenwick handed him.

"You'll come now, doctor, won't you?" asked Fenwick, breathlessly, as he sank almost exhausted into the seat the doctor had offered him.

"In half an hour I will go with you, Mr. Fenwick; I cannot go sooner, for I have one patient I must see at once. Sit here and rest, and I will return as soon as possible, and we will go."

"But, doctor, he's hurt; I did it — I shot him; he may die. Your patient is not dangerously ill; surely you can come at once."

"Sit down there, my man; I'll go with you as soon as I can. Doctor Chapman knows I am ever ready to serve him, but my patient has need of me, and has the first claim."

With these words, the busy doctor put on his great coat, for it was growing very cold, and went away. The disconsolate Fenwick must wait. His friend might die, and he would never hear him speak again. Why could not Dr. Granston come at once? This very half hour of time might save poor Bartmore; and — for the horror of the thing was strong upon poor Fenwick — free his life from a

reproach which, if Bartmore recovered not, must ever rest upon him. Thus did poor Fenwick sit and, finding sitting would not do, strode about the room and waited. How long, how unspeakably long, that waiting seemed no one but Fenwick could really know. But at last the doctor returned.

Dr. Granston was soon ready to start, and Fenwick got into his buggy with him, leaving his own wearied horse in the doctor's stable, where orders were given to care for her well.

The road over which they must travel was none of the best, but the doctor's buggy was strong, and his horse was fleet and sure, so they made the journey back to the farmhouse where Bartmore lay, as speedily as could reasonably have been expected. The journey was almost a silent one. The doctor asked Fenwick whether the wound was not a gunshot wound, stating that Dr. Chapman's note was not very clear on that point.

"I shot him," answered Fenwick; "the gun was loaded with shot, and I don't know whether the wound is great or small; but Dr. Chapman said the case was beyond him, and — I'm going mad! I tell you, sir, I shot him. Do you understand me? I, who love him; I, who have no brother but him. It was my wretched hand that did this thing!"

"Do you mean that in anger you have shot him?" asked Dr. Granston, sternly. "Was there a quarrel?"

Then Fenwick explained. The doctor softened at once, and told him to keep a good heart, and that he was sure that he, Fenwick, suffered as greatly as his friend. He begged Fenwick to be calm, and assured him that he would spare no pains to save his friend, and that until the result of the accident could be actually known, he would remain with Bartmore.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon when Dr. Granston and his companion reached the end of

their journey. One figure more sat in the chamber where Bartmore lay, now very still, but perfectly conscious. The newcomer was his mother. She sat by the bedside, her head bowed, and her thin, wrinkled hand clasped in that of her only child. As Fenwick and the doctor entered the room, Mrs. Bartmore arose quickly, and hastening to meet them, she placed her hand affectionately upon Fenwick's shoulder, saying in a broken voice as she did so:

"Richard, my poor boy, he knows you were not at fault in this dreadful day's disaster. He will tell you; they will all tell you so."

Then, indeed, did the strong man give way. Sobbing like a little child, he tottered toward the bed, but they put forth their arms and caught him; for the strain had been too great. And they bore him from the room, that they might care for and restore him.

After the doctors had greeted each other warmly, and Mrs. Bartmore had tried in vain to thank Dr. Granston for coming so far, they quietly cleared the room, not even permitting the pleading mother to remain there. And when they were alone with their patient, they at once made a complete examination of the wound. They took off the bandages, of course, and instantly Bartmore cried out, in a tone of deep anguish:

"I knew it! The bandages are away, yet it is dark — darker than the darkest night. I am not afraid to die; but to live thus! Oh, I cannot, I will not bear it! Speak, Dr. Chapman; you know the truth. Speak, I say; tell me, am I blind?"

The old doctor looked inquiringly at Dr. Granston, and then turned from the bedside.

"Mr. Bartmore," said Dr. Granston, bending over him and taking his hand, "at present you are blind. We are here to help you, if we can. I will not deceive you, nor will Dr. Chapman do so; we fear

that this blindness is the result of a paralysis which no human skill can cure; but we are not sure. Much may depend upon you now; and if there is any hope, your perfect quietude is the one thing needed to make it possible for that hope to be realized."

"Thank you, Dr. Granston," said Dr. Chapman, softly. "I could not do it, somehow."

"Will you take me home?" the poor fellow asked, submissively. "I will do as you bid me; but, oh, my God! Think of what it may mean! I may never again be of use, either to myself or to others — a burden, an object of pity — yes, even of public charity. Do you think I can look upon these dreadful possibilities and be patient?"

They quieted him, and told him they could not then remove him, but that they would await the coming of an oculist, for whom they had telegraphed, before proceeding further.

Why linger longer here? Why delay the truth? The oculist came. All that could be done for Bartmore was done, but human aid could not avail him, and within three short weeks from the time of the unfortunate accident, Michael Bartmore knew that he was blind, and that there was no hope left to him, no promise that the years that were to come might bring any change in his condition. And how did he bear this dreadful knowledge, do you ask. Let us follow him in his future career, and we shall see.

Mr. Samuel Fenwick had done his part. "If there's a way to make him see, if money will avail, I want him to see," said he. "He's a valuable man, and we can't spare him."

When it became known that Bartmore's sight could never be restored to him, Mr. Fenwick came to see him, and tried in his outspoken way to comfort and to reassure him concerning such things as might trouble him, especially concerning the matter of his future living, and the care of his aged mother.

"Michael, lad," he said, coming where Bartmore sat disconsolately in the great chair where he often sat now for hours without moving, or seeming to have the least desire to move, "I'm sorry, but cheer up; you've no need to worry, for you'll never know what it is to want, nor shall your mother. Dick says that we've every right to help you to our utmost, and that you must simply permit us to do so, and never think it an obligation."

Bartmore listened to the words of his good old friend, but it was not difficult to see that the words not only did not bring him comfort, but even seemed to increase his agitation and restlessness. His face flushed, his breath came hard, and when Mr. Fenwick had finished speaking, his pent-up feelings burst from him in words so earnestly uttered and so clearly setting forth those feelings and emotions which alone can find place in the hearts of those who have thus been brought suddenly face to face with what seems to them a dark, unbearable and hopeless state.

"Mr. Fenwick," he said, "you mean well by me, and you've done well by me, and I want you to know that I do, and that I shall always appreciate your inexhaustible goodness to me and to my poor mother; but, Mr. Fenwick, think of my condition as it is! Think of what a death-knell those words so kindly meant by you must sound to all the hopes, all the aspirations and desires of my manhood! You will ungrudgingly, nay, you will cheerfully feed me, clothe me, care for my every comfort, and for my slightest wants, if you know of them. You will take my mother, and she need want for nothing. I know all these things, and heaven knows I am grateful to you; and, since my hopes seem blasted by this thing that has befallen me, and since you have so generously come to our aid, I can tell you that I could accept help of you more readily than I could of any other being on earth; but—

and this I have fully determined upon — for myself, since by the loss of my sight I am rendered helpless and useless alike to others and to myself, I cannot, will not, longer be a burden upon you, nor upon any other man. The refuge for the poor and the helpless, sir, and even as those who have been forced to end their days there before me, so shall I, who am poor and helpless, go thither and wait with what patience and resignation I can command until the same God who has seen fit thus to afflict me shall grant unto me that last release for which I shall pray unceasingly. Nevertheless, since you have it in your generous heart to do what you can, and since by this affliction I can do nothing for her, I most gratefully accept your offer to care for my mother; for, though I know you neither ask nor expect it, she can and will make herself useful to you."

Mr. Fenwick moved uneasily in his chair, and, having thus far listened silently to Bartmore, he interrupted him rather impatiently:

"Do you mean the public almshouse, Michael Bartmore? Do you mean that you want nothing, if you can help taking it, from the father of him whose misfortune it was to thus hurt you?"

"I do mean the poorhouse, Mr. Fenwick," he replied. "Your son did not fire the shot; I urged him to hasten, and, while he was mounting his horse, I still urging him, the gun was discharged, and he does not know, nor does anyone know, just how it happened. I am going to get out of the way; that's about it. A blind man's of no use on a farm, and I don't know much about anything else. I can rust out in one place as well as in another, and I've no right to take from you what ought to be given to your children. Do not think me ungrateful, for I am not. You have done much for me — I don't know just how much, nor do I suppose you will ever tell me. I shall never be able to repay you in

any way, but in sincere gratitude, the sums of money you have expended in trying to save my sight; but I shall never do you the injustice to think regretfully of that; for if they had been able to save the sight, I could have repaid you; and since they could not, I know you will never expect, nor want, payment. But I'm sure, now, that I can help neither myself nor anyone else, and I want to be out of the way."

Mr. Fenwick knew not what to say to his young friend. He had come to offer to him all that he could think of, and the blind man had refused his offer. He knew nothing of other blind people, for in those days the great possibilities, the broad and ever-broadening views concerning our people and their capabilities were but remotely foreshadowed. The old farmer knew not what to say, and, like many another disappointed, baffled man, he beat a hasty retreat, saying as he left Bartmore:

"Think it over, boy; think it over."

Young Richard Fenwick did not return to his college, as he had intended doing, immediately after Thanksgiving. The shock to him of the accident, and the final result of it, had deeply distressed him, and he could not make up his mind to leave the place where his poor afflicted companion was. It was in vain that Bartmore remonstrated with him and urged him to dismiss the morbid feeling that had come upon him. Not a man attached the least blame to him for what had happened; nay, Bartmore steadfastly maintained that if Fenwick had been let alone, and not urged to greater activity by him, the accident could never have happened; and in this the other men who were of the party sustained him. Nevertheless, as has been said, poor Richard Fenwick could not recover his old buoyancy, and seemed to be rapidly lapsing into a state of melancholy dejection which, at least, so some of the people thought, was in a fair way to become as

deep-seated as the despondency which had settled upon poor Bartmore himself. When the elder Fenwick returned from his interview with Bartmore and told his son of the state of mind in which he had found that unhappy man, the son grew even more despondent than before, and both sat helplessly wondering how they might really help a man who, for so it then seemed to them, had obstinately resolved not to be helped, even by those who, as they saw it, had every right to help him.

Quietly seated at her little table, knitting away at the stockings she was forever making, good Mrs. Fenwick listened as her husband and son discussed the difficulty. She was a quiet woman, and her grief at the misfortune which had come to Michael Bartmore, of whom she, like most people, was very fond, was most sincere, and now she sympathized with the two men in their perplexity; still she seemed to see what did not occur to the others, and it was her suggestion that first seemed to open a way out of the trouble.

"I think, father," she said, quietly, "if we could find something that poor Michael could do, he would like to be employed. He is too independent to eat of our bread, unless he can in some way earn it. Both of you would feel just as he does, if you were situated as he now is, poor boy!" The suggestion was a practical one, and yet the voice quivered as it was made, and the motherly eyes of the tender-hearted housewife filled with tears as she uttered it.

"Why, mother," answered the elder Fenwick, "as to that, now, you may be right, and I'm sorry I didn't think of it. Of course, there's nothing the poor fellow really can do, but if we can make him think he's a-doin' somethin', that's all we care about; but what in thunder do you think we can make him believe he's a-doin'? That's what gets me."

"He's not to be so easily fooled, it is true," put in the son; "but mother is on the right track, father. I think I know how poor Bartmore feels."

Whether things are specially so ordered that our dire necessities may be met by that wise providence which is over all and is almost universally acknowledged, may be questioned, perhaps; but that things do sometimes happen at most auspicious times for our good is most certainly true. The thought suggested by his mother set young Fenwick thinking, and his mind dwelt constantly upon the idea that there might be some way in which Bartmore could really find useful occupation. Still, he knew nothing of the question with which he was called upon to deal, and he was staggered on all sides, because, think of what he would, there was, or seemed to be, some detail that required the use of that sense of which Bartmore was deprived. To find some work that might be readily done without sight, without being possessed of the knowledge that other methods than those in general use may well be applied in cases of necessity for doing any work, is, indeed, a most difficult and trying task, and it is especially difficult for the young to realize how readily those who are called upon to do so fall into methods of which, under other circumstances, they themselves would never have dreamed. It was while the Fenwicks, and, indeed, many of their friends, were pondering upon these things, that something happened which, as has been hinted above, gave great assistance when it was most sorely needed.

One morning, as Richard Fenwick was wending his way slowly toward the Bartmore home (for, though the despondent condition of his friend sorely grieved him, he visited him daily), he beheld posted on the church door, and in other conspicuous places in the village, placards announcing that a lecture would be delivered in the church by a Mr. Williams, who, the cards set forth, was a blind man.

Fenwick stood still and re-read the notice: in all his lifetime he had never known a blind man to visit Ormsby, nor had he ever before considered the question of what blind people did in order that they might live. He probably thought that when poor Bartmore said again and again that he had been rendered helpless and useless as a producer, he spoke the truth; and yet here was a blind man who was not sitting still, not helpless, but actually going about from place to place and delivering lectures, and, doubtless, supporting himself by means of this enterprise. It occurred to Fenwick that, perhaps, if he could induce Bartmore to attend this lecture, and if he could bring the two men together, the active man might be able to inspire some hope, some activity, in the man who was so utterly cast down. Stepping briskly up to the door of the rectory, he asked to speak with the minister, and, with but few preliminaries, laid before that worthy man his new-found hope. The rector heard him patiently, and became himself elated with the new idea.

"I knew not what to say when this man applied for our little room; I feared we could not gather together sufficient people to make it worth his while to come, and yet, though I could promise but little, I found myself constrained, almost against my better judgment, to bid him come and speak to us. I hope our poor dear Bartmore may be inspired by this man, and I hope, too, that Ormsby will turn out in goodly numbers to hear him; for I fancy he has need of all he can thus earn."

"His lecture shall be well attended, sir," responded Fenwick; "I'll do one good day's work, at least, for I'll go among the people and urge them to come. I'll bring the farmers in from the country round about, and he shall do well here; and if he'll help Michael Bartmore, if he will inspire some hope in him, it shall prove a better thing than he may

think; for my father knows how to requite a real service to the community, such as this would be."

Leaving the good minister, Fenwick hastened to the house of Bartmore, and, with all the persuasive arguments he could use, almost forced him to promise that he would accompany him that evening to hear the lecture. Having accomplished this, he went forth and spent hours in visiting the people and urging them to come, telling them it would help Bartmore if they would do so. He was late getting home that evening, and immediately notified the household of what he had been doing, and that they must all make ready and attend the lecture. The elder Fenwick ably seconded his son's efforts, you may be sure. He ordered out his horses and his wagons, and sent them forth to gather in and to convey all the people they could carry to the lecture. Dick (he was the merry Dick of old on this day) hastily attired himself, left the conduct of affairs in his father's willing charge, and hastened back to Bartmore's home, where he had promised to come and escort him and his aged mother to hear the blind man Williams lecture.

Surely Richard Fenwick had done his work well. The village people flocked to the little Sabbath School room of the church, and the people from the surrounding country also came in great numbers, so that long before the time set for the lecture to begin the little room was crowded to its utmost limit, and many more persons were outside, who clambered for admittance. When young Fenwick reached the place, he found these people who were unable to get into the small room reluctantly turning away from the place, and, not wishing to see them disappointed, he went at once to the good clergyman and asked him to permit the lecturer to speak in the church, which, he urged, would accommodate all those who had come to hear him.

"I know," said Fenwick, "that you do not feel about this thing as some do. Your church is consecrated and is for worship of God alone; but the people want to hear this man, and we believe he may help Bartmore."

The Rev. Mr. Dansbury was a man well beloved by the people of Ormsby, whether they were of his flock or not; and his broad sympathies in the interests and trials of his fellow creatures made both men and women confide in him, and often give careful heed to his wise counsels. He was a staunch churchman, zealous for the predominating influence of those principles and articles of faith for which he stood; but he was not a bigot, and never lost an opportunity to do good if he saw one. He smiled benignly upon young Fenwick, and made answer:

"Surely, in the name of the author of all humanity, this man shall speak to the people in the church. He is an earnest man, and desires to tell us how he has been sustained in his efforts to overcome, as far as may be possible, the obstacles which seem so insurmountable. He shall speak in the church of God, and no man will gainsay what I am doing; for the church is for the people, and will ever open its doors to the righteous cause of suffering humanity."

So it came about that the church was opened, and the people flocked in, and it was soon well filled. Bartmore sat well forward, and Fenwick sat beside him, while on the other side sat his aged mother, whose careworn face won the deepest sympathy of all those who looked upon it that night. The people were now seated, and Mr. Dansbury introduced Mr. Williams, the speaker of the evening, who, he said, would, in addition to delivering his lecture on bee culture, in which he had been very successful for some years, offer a few brief remarks upon the handicap under which the sightless are placed, with

a view to showing that no handicap exists against which there is not some means of fighting, and a good chance of winning at least a partial victory.

The lecture, or talk, was delivered in a simple manner, and it interested those who heard it greatly. The speaker stated that there were many things to be done in connection with his work which he had long since learned that he could not well do; "but," he said, "I never doubted everybody. I knew what was to be done, so I found the right people to do the work, and showed them what to do. If I made a mistake and got the wrong person, I soon discovered the fact, because I failed to obtain results; then I tried other help, and have had no more trouble with those I have employed than sighted men, and I have found my helpers become even unusually interested and anxious to help me in my efforts."

As the sightless speaker went on telling of his profits and of his experiences in his work, many eyes were turned upon Michael Bartmore. From the first moment the speaker began the face of the suffering listener showed that his attention was wholly fixed upon what was being said. When some trite remark was made by the speaker, such as, "There are men who can direct others how to do things they may be unable to do themselves. I have often seen a small, weak man show a big, strong man how to use his strength to far greater advantage than its possessor would ever have used it," his face lighted, and new thoughts seemed to be dawning upon him.

Interesting as the lecture was, the few remarks which were made afterwards must be considered to have made the first strong impression upon Michael Bartmore; and we cannot do better than to quote his very words:

"I have been asked to say a few words concerning the loss of my sight, and of the reason why I have

selected the line of work in which I am now engaged. I came here to tell of bee raising as a profitable business if carefully managed. I did not mean to say more concerning my blindness than might really be necessary; but since I have been asked to say something on this subject, that my success, small as it has been, may perhaps help my fellow-men, I will tell you briefly all that I can say about it.

"I was born on a farm, and from my early boyhood days I was interested in the bees which my father always kept upon the place. I had my sight until I had reached the age of thirty. I had married five years previously, and when the darkness came upon me, I had a delicate wife and two little ones to care for. For a time I was utterly crushed. I saw nothing but dependence upon the bounty of others, and my people had little indeed to give. My wife was stronger than I was, and she it was who urged me not to give up, nor to try to master some new plan of life, but to try whether I might not devise methods for doing at least a part of the work I knew so well. She promised that she would help, and assured me that if I would but try, I must succeed."

Here the speaker paused, and those who watched him closely saw the look of pain and sadness that rested for a moment upon his calm, earnest face. Then he went on:

"But that help has been taken from me now. It never failed me, and the memory of her patience, the encouragement she gave me still lives, and helps me, even though she who comforted and steadfastly clung to me has gone to that rest which I know must await such as she was. The thought she gave to me was, that I ought to try to use those things I had learned, if possible, before my sight failed me, and this has been the secret of my success in the humble calling I have chosen. If any man be

stricken blind, let him bear his affliction as a man should bear the inevitable in life, not by vainly repining and resigning himself to a condition of hopeless despair, but by laboring unceasingly to fill some place in life, however humble, that shall render him truly useful and happy. If a man can only know that he is of some use in the world, and he is a right-thinking man, he cannot become a victim to that morbidness which is so ruinous. Show your fellow-men that you will do your part, be ready to profit by your own mistakes, accept in a generous spirit the kindly courtesies others will show you, and the blind man becomes a happy man, and a man who is ever sure that where eyes are needed, he need never invoke their aid in vain.

"And now a word to this good man, and to the people who have done generously by me this night, who have come out in such great numbers to hear me. I am traveling for a brief period, delivering my lecture, because, during the last year, my enterprise did not yield well, and I had need of funds. How many are present here I know not, but this thing I do know, that I have been permitted to speak in a house consecrated to the worship of Him from whom cometh all good, and for this, and for your kindly treatment of me, I thank you. I am not one of those who fancy that the only way to be independent is to refuse the willing help of others. I need help, and so do we all, and though, perhaps, I may never have the chance to do it, I am ready and anxious to help when and where I can."

The speaker ceased. There was a moment of absolute silence, and then, before a soul could stir to leave the church, Michael Bartmore, tall, his head erect, and his manly form trembling visibly with emotion, stood up, and in a clear, firm voice, cried out:

"Your chance to help has come to you this night. All of you have heard what this good man has said,

and now I want your help. I'll try to do as this brave man does, and I'm sure all of you will support me in my effort."

Bartmore could say no more, nor was there any need that he should say more. The people flocked joyfully about him, bringing Williams, the blind lecturer with them; and it was a goodly sight to see the two men as they clasped hands in a firm, brotherly grasp. And this meeting was the beginning of a friendship which lasted through their lives.

The little church at Ormsby was indeed a refuge that night for the sorrowing and the afflicted, and as the holy man who had bade this sightless man to speak in the house of worship stood there in the midst of those now rejoicing people, his face was radiant with the great joy that welled up in his heart because he had been guided to do this good deed.

There had come into that church a man bowed down with sorrow and despair — a strong man tottering and faltering as he walked; a man whose very soul seemed crushed within him. There went forth from that sacred house that same man with head erect, with hope and radiant joy shining like a blessed diadem upon his brow, and with a step firm and steady, like the step of a well and buoyant man. Michael Bartmore knew not then what he would do; it did not matter what he might do; it was enough that he felt sure now that he should do something, and he was willing to grapple with his handicap in that spirit of manly resignation which makes of human beings bright and shining light along the rugged, ofttimes dark path of life — beacon lights to guide the faltering footsteps of their struggling, striving brothers.

Old Fenwick was beside himself with joy, which he expressed after his own fashion as soon as he got outside of the church. He brought down his

mighty hands smartly upon the shoulders of Bartmore, asked him when he would come and take charge of his farm, and, as was his habit, burst into a roar of laughter, slapping his legs with those same mighty hands aforesaid with such force that if he bore no bruises from the blows, it must have been because the legs had grown tough from the frequency of such usage.

As for Bartmore's mother, her troubled face now wore an almost heavenly look of peace. She had sorrowed with her beloved son, and because he had lost all hope, she, too, had lost heart; but, believing in him, trusting in him as she did, as she had always done, his now revived hopes inspired her anew, and she saw a future, not of utter misery and despair for her son, but a future of happiness and usefulness in which she, too, might help him. How fondly she held the hand of the blind man who had spoken the inspiring words which had awakened in Michael those thoughts which must culminate in his success! How fervently the words of blessing upon the stranger were spoken! And when she said to young Fenwick, laying her hand affectionately upon his shoulder, "Richard, you have done a great work this day; how shall I ever repay you?" who can marvel that the big fellow's eyes were moist as he answered softly: "I have longed to do one good thing, and if only he will let me, I will be eyes for him until my life's end."

Williams was a prisoner at Ormsby. His bees would not run away, Bartmore told him, and they had need of him in their midst for a few days. Old Fenwick, too, urged him to remain, saying that he and his son wanted to have a talk with him; and the good minister so earnestly seconded their requests that the man was forced to yield to these united importunities; and so he remained awhile with Bartmore.

"There's just one thing troubling me," said Bartmore, as he and his new-found friend sat together after breakfast on the morning following the lecture; "I'm afraid people will do for me, and will accept what I do, not as they would do with others. They will hide from me the defects in my work, and accept what I offer only because I am blind. I do not want that; I want to earn what I get honestly and thoroughly."

"I've heard that before," answered Williams; "I understand what you mean, and you ought to want to earn what you get; but, remember this thing always, that the men and women of this world are but stewards of those possessions that are committed to their keeping, and if any of them desire to put forth a helping hand and aid us in our battle for a place in the busy world, neither you nor I have a right to prevent them. There is a great difference between stiff-necked, empty pride, and real independence, and we should have a care that we do not mistake the one for the other."

So Williams remained for a few days. He went and had a talk with the Fenwicks, and many plans were laid which, as will be seen, though not carried out in accordance with some of the original suggestions of Fenwick and his enthusiastic son, resulted, nevertheless, in the ultimate realization of the thing which Williams then expressed the hope might come to pass. Before he left, he was assured that Michael Bartmore should receive a fair trial at Minglewood Farm, and again and again he asserted that the blind man who had once managed the place would manage it again.

"Now, then," said Fenwick to his son after their talk with Williams, "I'm ready to try anything, or to do anything I can for Michael; and so we'll just tell him that we are satisfied that he can fill his old place here, and give him his old salary. You and I understand that he cannot really fill the position,

but we can let him feel that he can, and see to it that what he cannot do is done for him. This man Williams is a bright fellow, but I suppose that in his town they look out for him, and so they ought to do."

"Of course we will help him," answered the son; "he must be made as happy as possible, and we must seize upon any opportunity that may come to us to bring this about. I am ready, father, to give up all my plans for the future, and I will remain with you and take the burden of the work from your shoulders; for, if, as you say, Michael cannot do the work he once did, you will need me here; so I bid farewell to college life, to that pursuit on which I had set my heart. This is a disappointment to me, father, but what is it when compared with the terrible void that has come into poor Bartmore's life? I want to help him; and since you will do this thing, I shall find happiness in performing for him the work he may be unable to do."

Mrs. Fenwick sat knitting in her old place as these two talked and planned thus, and a quiet, almost heavenly expression came upon her sweet face as she listened to the manly words of her son. She waited patiently until they had finished speaking, and then she said, looking fondly at the boy:

"I think Michael will soon know what he can really do, and if he should ever discover that you are trying to make him think that he is of service when he is not, you will find that your chances for helping him are lost altogether. Wait a little while, and perhaps Michael will come to you; and, if you would really help him, let him say what he would like to do, and let him try that. If he succeeds at one thing, he will strive to do other things, and it may be that some day he will truly and honestly fill his old position."

Old Fenwick smoked awhile in silence, and Richard looked earnestly into his mother's kindly face.

"I see, mother," said the old man, looking admiringly upon her, "that if this business is to succeed, you will be at the bottom of it. You are right; if ever any man fools Michael Bartmore, and he discovers it, no matter how good that man's intentions may be, Bartmore will trust him no more. If he comes to us, we will do as you say; but if he does not come, mother——"

"But he will surely come, my dear," she answered. "He believes now that he can work; let us, then, wait for him, and let us be guided by him."

So they decided to do as this good and wise woman suggested, and it was well, indeed, that they thus decided; and her insight into the deeper feelings of the afflicted man did much to accomplish the cherished desires of her son and husband.

When young Fenwick next visited his old friend, he found him quite cheerful, and there was a look of firm resolve upon his face that was far more pleasant to look upon than the dreadful despairing look that had so long dwelt there. Bartmore welcomed his friend with the old bright smile which Fenwick had never hoped to see again.

"Dick," he said, as soon as they were seated, "that man Williams is a wonderful fellow. No one ever came to arouse him as he has come to me, and yet he went on like a brave man, and he is a useful, busy man, too."

"Yes," answered Dick, "and now that you are aroused, old fellow, we all know that you will do as great, and even greater, things than he does. Keep up a brave heart; don't be foolish and refuse to let your friends help you, and you'll be manager of Minglewood Farm again one of these days."

Bartmore smiled rather sadly as he made answer: "Of that I have little hope, but as a hand on that farm, I am sure I can earn a living. I have thought of work that I know I can do, and I shall come to your father to-morrow, and if he can give me the

work, I will try to do it; and as I go on from day to day, I shall try to find ways in which I may do other work. It is like beginning all over again, Dick, you know; but it is not so bad if I know that I am to be given a fair chance, and I believe your father will not fear to let me try to do a thing if I tell him I believe I can do it."

This was just what Richard Fenwick wanted He did not know what Bartmore might be able to do; but he did know that a disposition on one side to try, and on the other side to wait and give the striving man every chance, failure was impossible. It is hard to strive against physical disability of any kind, and those who do strive to overcome as far as may be possible any such handicap, deserve much credit; but hard as is the fight against the disability, the fight to overcome the deep-rooted unbelief which is even in this late day so rife among those who, being more fortunate, seem unable to conceive that men will and do fight bravely on, and would always win, if only they are given a fair chance. Michael Bartmore was, indeed, favored in this particular; for, though the Fenwicks were by no means sure that he could perform any really useful task, they were quite willing, and even anxious, to give him the thing for which he asked — a chance to show them what a man in earnest and under great necessity could do; for even in this day, when so much is done to remove the bar by which sightless men and women, intelligent, and often talented, are forced into comparative inactivity because of their utter inability to battle down this skepticism among others who are possessed of sight, still exists.

Let no one who may read this tale say that these words are written reproachfully. No man has ever drunk more deeply of that milk of human kindness which, in spite of what many may say, flows freely in this good old world than has the writer; nor

would he be true to his knowledge of men if he failed to acknowledge here the wonderful efforts which many philanthropic and broad-minded men and women are constantly making in our behalf. But, while the hearts of most men and women are ready to sympathize with us because of our handicap, unbelief, and, consequently, unwillingness to give to us a chance to try to do what we can, is still the great drawback to our success. There are many talented sightless organists in our land, yet how few are found in our churches! Do any sightless men or women sing in the choir of the church where you worship? Are any of your children taught music by any of the able sightless teachers who are scattered plentifully throughout our land? Do you men of business meet and treat the sightless man of business when he enters your place as you meet and treat the sighted? Think upon these things, and consider that the sweetest bread man can eat is the bread that he can earn; and if you can give a man without sight a chance to earn half a loaf, you will do a greater kindness than by giving him many loaves which he has not earned.

When Bartmore made his visit to Minglewood, his mother accompanied him; and he at once stated plainly what he desired.

"I believe that at present I can earn but little," he said. "If my hopes are realized, I feel that ere long I can do many things about the place which will prove of use. If you believe that I can earn so much, I would ask that the little cabin on your place be given to me for a place of abode for my mother and myself, and I feel sure that I can earn enough to justify this and sufficient wages to enable us to be comfortable. I ask but to try, and if I fail, I shall surely know it and cease to burden you."

Of course, Mr. Fenwick readily agreed to this proposal; but he told Bartmore that the cabin was

in need of some repairs, which he said he would cause to be made.

"If you don't mind," responded Bartmore, "I'll try to make those repairs. Williams told me of many devices he had for using tools, and I have already tried a little, and I find it isn't half so difficult as I fancied it might be. All I need is a rule, and if Dick will make me one, I can manage very well."

Dick would make the rule, you may be sure. It was but a stick two feet in length, and each inch was marked by a round-headed tack on one edge, while on the other edge were tacks set half an inch apart. Bartmore had no difficulty in making this answer his purpose, and so he was soon busy; and, though he found difficulties in the way, he ceased not to strive against them, and when, after three days of hard toil, he said his task was done, old Mr. Fenwick went out to inspect it; and, though, perhaps, he expected only to see a partial success, he returned to his house a much surprised and a much wiser man.

"Dick," he cried, "Bartmore never did a job better when he had his sight. You go and look at it, and you'll say the same thing."

Seated there by her little table, her sweet face turned toward her husband, Mrs. Fenwick said softly:

"Father, we shall see the day when Michael will be the manager of Minglewood again."

Now Michael Bartmore settled down to work in right good earnest, and as he found himself able to accomplish some new thing almost daily, he grew happier, and soon became the cheerful, pleasant-faced Michael of old. When his affliction had weighed so heavily upon him, he had lost the merry old way of which the people were so fond. Many had avoided him, not at all because of any lack of sympathy, but because they could not brook the

mournful look of utter dejection that rested upon his face. But now it was very different, and people sought him, and delighted to talk with him as they had done before, and the boys and girls of the village renewed their friendship with him, and found him still interested in their childish sports. As a little child steps cautiously at first, uncertain of its power to walk, even so did Bartmore move cautiously in his efforts to do those things without the aid of sight which he had once done so easily with the help of that most valuable sense.

Having demonstrated to his own satisfaction, and to the satisfaction of the people on the farm, that his hands had by no means forgotten their cunning in the use of tools, Bartmore set about repairing all the outbuildings on the place. Fenwick gave orders that any of the hands must assist the sightless man when he desired their aid. "And mind," he said, "he knows what he wants; so when he asks one of you to do a thing, just do it as he directs." This instruction was of more real help than perhaps even Mr. Fenwick suspected; for it at once established the important impression upon the minds of the hands that, though Bartmore did not see, he knew exactly what he wanted. And it soon became clear also that if he did make a mistake, he was ready to acknowledge it, and never tried to fix the responsibility upon others. If a man said a thing could not be done as Bartmore directed, or seemed inclined to shirk, Bartmore would set about doing the thing himself; and it always happened then that the man who had demurred became ashamed and either finished the task, or never demurred again.

It would be interesting to follow this man step by step as he mastered difficulty after difficulty which arose. Sometimes it was many days before he succeeded in accomplishing the thing he had set out to do; but he always either accomplished it, or found that he could not, and said so. Michael Bart-

more never pretended, never allowed people to believe that he could do a thing which he could not do; consequently, he escaped those humiliating situations which must occur in the lives of those who seek to give an exaggerated impression respecting their capabilities.

After the lapse of one year, Bartmore was receiving good wages, and he was earning all he received. He suggested the introduction of improved and labor-saving machinery, and, as he had stated, the profits began to increase. Fenwick began to see that Bartmore's executive ability had not deserted him in the least, and so, being anxious to do all in his power to make the sightless man happy, he offered him his old place, stating that it was clear to him, and to everyone else, that he, Bartmore, could manage the place in a perfectly satisfactory manner.

"You want to hasten a thing which we must be very sure about," answered Bartmore. "Let us wait a little longer, sir; I am satisfied to have things as they are at present. I want to manage the farm, and, thanks to your patience and goodness, I believe I shall yet be able to do it; but if you will pardon my saying so, I shall know best when I am truly able to do it, and, since you are good enough to trust and believe in me, I will come to you and ask for the place as soon as I am sure I can discharge the duties thereof. I appreciate your treatment of me, and I want to justify what you are doing; so let me work it out in my own way."

Fenwick smiled such a warm, approving smile that it is a pity Bartmore could not see it; but he could and did hear the warm words of honest commendation which fell from the old man's lips, and they lent new zest to his determined efforts to become what he now felt himself not quite fitted to become. He said again that he wanted the position,

and that he would not cease to do all in his power to fit himself for it.

It is not to be supposed that Michael Bartmore attempted to do all the work of every kind that was to be done on a large farm; for this was neither his business nor his ambition. He did not feel that it was at all incumbent upon him, for example, to care for the horses from day to day in the matter of feeding and cleaning them; but he did consider it necessary to examine into the condition of those horses frequently, and he soon became so well accustomed to making such examinations that those who had the work to do came to consider it useless to try in any way to shirk or slight their work, knowing, as they did, that the fault would be discovered, and that Bartmore, though always gentle, and ready to forgive the shortcomings of his fellow man, would insist upon the work being done over in the proper manner.

It was nearly at the close of the second year of what Bartmore good-humoredly called his probation that the crowning joy of his life came to him, and, though he was daily working to attain it, it came unexpectedly, after all; and we cannot better conclude our tale than by giving an account of just how it happened.

One morning Mr. Fenwick asked Michael if he and his mother would dine with his family on that day. This was not at all usual; but Bartmore, having planned much work for the day, asked if they might not be excused, saying that another time he and his mother would be glad to come.

"This is a busy day with me," he said, "and I am afraid it will be late before I finish up."

"I have invited friends whom I want you to meet, Michael," answered the good man, "and I shall have to ask you to put off your busy day until to-morrow. I did not suppose it would matter very much to you,

so I went ahead and made all my arrangements; so we will expect you."

"The men have their orders, and I——"

"And you are a stubborn rascal," broke in Fenwick. "Let the men alone to-day; let's see what they'll do. I believe most of them think you know what they are doing, even when you are not present, anyhow. Let them alone, and be ready for dinner on time."

There was no gainsaying the old gentleman, and so, though Bartmore did not quite heed the injunction to let the men alone for the day, he so arranged matters that at the appointed hour he was quite ready, and, accompanied by his proud and devoted mother, repaired to the house of his friend and benefactor.

When Michael and his mother arrived, they were indeed surprised to find that many other guests were present. There was old Dr. Chapman, and with him Dr. Granston. There, too, was Williams, the lecturer, the Rev. Mr. Dansbury and his daughter, and many of the leading farmers of the district. Young Fenwick, who had long since returned to his college, because, as his father had told him, he was not at all needed about the place while Bartmore was there, had come home for the occasion, and was beaming with delight upon everyone present, not forgetting an occasional covert and expressive glance at Miss Dansbury, who, though the most retiring and modest girl for miles around, did not seem displeased at all with his behavior. Everyone greeted Bartmore and his mother warmly, and everyone seemed to be full of some great joy which burst forth in wreaths of sunny smiles that warmed the hearts of every member of that little gathering.

As the last guests arrived and dinner was announced, old Fenwick stepped forward and gave his arm to Mrs. Bartmore; while Mrs. Fenwick, a sweet, triumphant smile lighting up her lovely face,

took the arm of the man she had said would again be manager of Minglewood Farm. As for Dick, he hit upon a happy thought. Of course, it was natural and right that he should take Miss Dansbury out to dinner, and he had no intention of foregoing that pleasure; but, so anxious was he that Williams should understand and feel that his family very much appreciated him, that, setting aside custom, he offered first his escort to Miss Dansbury, and then insisted that Williams must go out to dinner with them.

Some reader who may do us the honor to peruse these pages may be reading at a time and in a place when it would be impossible to satisfy the inner man; so we mercifully refrain from giving an account of the many tempting dishes that were served at the dinner, knowing full well that such an account must make even a full man hungry. Let it suffice that after Mr. Dansbury had reverently asked a blessing, the guests fell to in right good earnest, and amid merry talking and happy, innocent mirth, did ample justice to the meal.

When the dinner was finished, the Rev. Mr. Dansbury called upon their host for an after-dinner speech. It was never quite clear, but young Dick hinted afterwards that this had all been previously arranged between the good rector and his father. The latter insisted that, unless some such plan were adopted, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for him to find any way to begin.

"I never tried to make a speech in my life," said Fenwick, rising in his place at the head of the table. "I could never make a regulation speech, no matter how much nor how hard I did try; but I guess I can say a thing that I very much want to say, that I am proud and glad I can say with sufficient clearness to make myself understood.

"All save two of us understand why we are gathered together here this day, and it only remains for

me to tell these two. Michael Bartmore, here in the presence of these, your friends and well-wishers, I again offer to you your old place as manager of Minglewood Farm. I offer this place to you, because you have honestly won it for yourself. From the beginning, your influence here, your practical knowledge of the work, and your ability to cope with what even I once considered insurmountable difficulties, your honest and manly desire to be in every possible way of service to me and mine,— all these things have worked great good upon this place. My farm is better cared for, my stock and my appliances are in better order, and my profits are greater than they have ever been before. Because of these things, Michael, and because, too, of the splendid battle I have seen you fight, I now tender to you this place; and in doing so, I am serving myself, as well as trying to honor you."

There followed then a long pause as old Fenwick resumed his seat. All eyes were turned upon Bartmore, who sat as one in a trance. But as the sightless man felt the silence, and knew he was the center of the looks and thoughts of those about him, that strength of will which had so helped him in his struggle against his handicap failed him not altogether. He slowly arose, and in a voice that faltered often, and broke more than once as he spoke, he made reply:

"This is the happiest hour I have known since the night on which another sightless man showed me a light that no blindness need ever shut out from me.

"You have all heard the generous words that have just been spoken to me, and you all feel that they do honor to my ever-devoted mother. I can say nothing in reply that can make any of you know how deeply grateful I am that such words could be sincerely said to me in the presence of those I so love and esteem. I accept the trust you will repose in me, Mr. Fenwick. My father had the place, and

after him I had obtained it; and then — well, for a little while I had to give it up."

Here the speaker's voice broke, and it was some little time before he could go on. His mother sat gazing lovingly upon him, and all those who heard him were deeply impressed with the great earnestness of his manner.

"But," he went on, recovering himself, "that is all passed; we must not be sad to-day, for the thing I have longed for, tried for, and unceasingly prayed for, has now come to me. We have all heard it stated that if the blind lead the blind, they will both fall into a ditch; but surely this applies not to that mental leading which I received from one who is with us to-day; for — and I say it here because it is due him — if this man had not been mercifully sent to me, I fear I might still be in that state of utter hopelessness which had fastened itself so firmly upon me. If ever the sightless are moved and rightly guided to help themselves, I am persuaded that it will be most effectually done by other sightless persons who, like this good man, have found for themselves the way. If I have gained any honor among men, if I have successfully grappled with and, so far as may be possible, mastered my handicap, I say that the man who spoke to us that night in the house of God gave to me the inspiration; and for this I want to thank him."

Here again he paused, and then, his voice growing stronger and, if possible, more sincere in its ring, he concluded thus:

"From the moment I came to this place, I resolved to win if I could the position that has been given to me this day. I can say that no man could ever have been shown greater consideration than has been shown to me by you, and by all who are in your house, Mr. Fenwick. I have had every wish granted, and now it shall be my life-work to so serve you and yours, that no regret may come to

you because of me, or of your great and limitless goodness to me."

Then there was much shaking of hands, and everybody talked at once, and Williams found himself as much honored and congratulated as Bartmore. It was in vain that he protested again and again that, whether he had come among them or not, Bartmore would have aroused himself. Bartmore then insisted, and ever after insisted, that the inspiring words of the man who spoke in the little church at Ormsby had moved him to make the effort concerning which we have tried to tell in this humble tale.

(The End.)